



# International Trade Committee

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Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade  
Department for International Trade  
Old Admiralty Building  
Admiralty Place  
London  
SW1A 2BL

29 November 2021

Dear Anne-Marie,

Thank you for your time last week, to discuss the Agreement in Principle (AiP) with New Zealand. In the session, we raised our concerns that the Committee is not being kept suitably sighted on developments, and noted that – notwithstanding any suggested sensitivities – it appears the media was given advance sight of the AiP, unlike this Committee.<sup>1</sup>

In the session, you agreed that it was important to ensure that contact between your department and the Committee was being managed well, and identified this as something you are keen to work with us on.<sup>2</sup> I am grateful for this, and we look forward to developing this improved sharing of information. I hope that, through your response to the International Agreements Committee's recent report on international agreement scrutiny working practices<sup>3</sup> and my related letter<sup>4</sup>, we will be able to start this work before recess.

However, while I do welcome this progress, I'm afraid wider issues around timely information-sharing and access, which I raised following your appointment,<sup>5</sup> remain.

For example, the Board of Trade's digital trade report<sup>6</sup> was published at 10.30pm on 25 November. My Committee did not receive notification or advance sight of this until a few hours before, whereas I understand the media was briefed on the morning of 24 November and received embargoed copies that evening. This seems very similar to the issue we raised about the AiP seeming being shared with media significantly before the Committee.<sup>7</sup> I do not consider this acceptable, and the fact that both documents could apparently be shared with the media under embargo does not support the argument that they weren't ready sufficiently ready to share with us.

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<sup>1</sup> [Qq4, 6](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Q6](#)

<sup>3</sup> House of Lords, Report of the International Agreements Committee, Session 2021–22, [HL Paper 75](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Letter from the Chair to the Secretary of State supporting recommendations and conclusions from the House of Lords International Agreements Committee \(IAC\) seventh report, 28 September 2021](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Letter from the Chair to the Secretary of State relating to her appointment as Trade Secretary, 17 September 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> UK Board of Trade, [Digital trade](#), November 2021

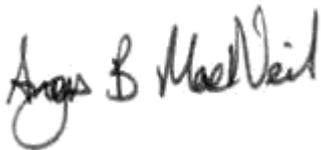
<sup>7</sup> [Q4](#)

Please can you confirm that your desire to improve working practices extends beyond the scrutiny of trade agreements to the full remit of your department and my Committee. Please can you also provide assurance that you will direct your officials to provide this Committee with at least the same level of embargoed access as the media, reflecting and acknowledging the importance of parliamentary scrutiny.

I would be grateful for your response before the House rises for recess, at the latest.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter, along with any replies, will be published on the Committee's webpage.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angus B MacNeil". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'M'.

Angus Brendan MacNeil  
Chair of the International Trade Committee